

# THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

**INSIDE**

**Join May Day Brigade! Learn  
about Cuba's socialist revolution**

— PAGE 4

## Gains made in 'Militant' drive pave way to win new readers

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The international drive to expand the long-term readership of the *Militant* has been a resounding success, exceeding the international goal with 385 renewal subscriptions being sold during the course of the six-week drive.

This response shows the growing interest in the Socialist Workers Party — its program and activities — as the party joins in efforts by working people to fight against moves of the bosses and their government to put the cost of the deepening capitalist social, economic and moral crisis on our backs.

What was accomplished through this effort sets the stage for the upcoming spring international campaign to win new readers to the *Militant*, expand the circulation of books by revolutionary leaders, and win contributors to the Militant Fighting Fund which helps ensure the paper continues to come off the presses.

The renewal drive was originally set to win 20% of the more than 1,300

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## Protesters demand: 'Amnesty for workers without papers in the US!'



Union construction workers join New York "Day Without Immigrants" protest, one of more than 25 actions around U.S. Feb. 14. Bosses use threat of deportations to attack working class.

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — Well over two dozen "Day Without Immigrants" actions took place coast to coast Feb. 14, many demanding amnesty for the 11 million immigrants in the U.S. without government-recognized papers.

The initial call for the actions was made by 23-year-old Carlos Espina, who is popular on the TikTok social media platform. Then Spanish-language television channel Telemundo reported on it. Espina says he supported Joseph

## Oil workers rally in fight for new national contract



Over 200 Steelworkers union refinery workers and supporters rally for industrywide contract outside Marathon Petroleum in Findlay, Ohio, Feb. 15, part of preparation for possible strike.

BY KAITLIN ESTILL

FINDLAY, Ohio — Over 200 United Steelworkers union-organized oil refinery workers and their supporters from across the country gathered in front of Marathon Petroleum's corporate headquarters here Feb. 15 demanding the bosses reach a new contract that meets

the needs of the workers. Their old contract ran out Feb. 1 and the union rejected Marathon's latest proposal. Workers are still on the job under a series of 24-hour extensions while negotiations continue.

Marathon, the largest oil refining company in the country, and the Steelworkers union are bargaining for a contract that will set the pattern for wages, benefits, working conditions, job security and other national issues in the industry for its 30,000 workers. Each local also negotiates a separate contract on safety questions and other local issues.

When Dave Martin, who works at the Marathon refinery in Catlettsburg, Kentucky, saw this worker-correspondent with the *Militant*, he said, "I bet I know

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## Workers, families look for relief from price hikes, capitalist crisis

BY TERRY EVANS

How to win protection from the disastrous effects of the deep-rooted social crisis of capitalism is a question confronting more working people and our families today. It's becoming harder and harder to start a family, or hold one together.

Beginning in 2021, price hikes for food, rent, electricity, fuel and other necessities accelerated. Long-term joblessness remains higher than before the pandemic and the burden of rising household debt presses down on workers and farmers.

Uncertainty about the future, spiraling costs of child care and rent and declining real wages have led more young men and women to hold off starting

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## Demand end to Ottawa's moves to stop protests, suspend rights

BY STEVE PENNER

MONTREAL — "The Feb. 14 imposition of the Emergencies Act by the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau is a major attack on the democratic and political rights of working people," Philippe Tessier said in a statement released by the Communist League Feb. 15. Tessier is the Communist League candidate in the Quebec provincial by-election in Marie-Victorin.

The anti-working-class act gives the government power to prohibit protests or any form of political action if it claims they could lead to "a breach of the peace," threaten national security, or interfere with "the use of property" — like, for example, a strike picket line.

It also gives Ottawa the power to use the army against workers or others fighting for their rights, as it did in the summer of 1990 when troops were sent against Mohawk Natives in Oka, Que.

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## Moscow hands off Ukraine! US troops out of Eastern Europe!

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Moscow's military buildup and menacing war exercises in the region threatens Ukrainian sovereignty and independence and pose the potential of a ground war with devastating consequences for working people throughout Europe.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is using the German rulers' dependency on Russian energy supplies to pressure them to stand aside. As Moscow asserts its interests it also aims to deepen rifts between Berlin and Washington.

The U.S. government and its close allies have pulled most of their military training units and diplomatic personnel out of Ukraine. These actions all confirm the fact that Washington's belief it

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GM workers in Mexico vote for new independent union

# Kentucky 'Angels on Horseback' set example in family health care

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

"Angels on Horseback: Midwives in the Mountains," a KET-TV documentary on PBS, brings to light a pioneering initiative to provide health care in rural Appalachia. Begun in 1925, the Frontier Nursing Service reduced infant mortality and maternal deaths in eastern Kentucky to among the lowest rates in the nation. It went on to provide care for men as well as women and children — the entire family — improving conditions for working people throughout the area.

Mary Breckinridge, born into a wealthy family with roots in Kentucky, initiated the effort. She had been expected to get married, preferably to someone rich, and spend her life as a housewife.

Instead, after the death of her first husband, she went to nursing school. After the deaths of her two children, Breckinridge was determined to find a better way to provide health care for mothers and young children.

After serving as an ambulance driver in France during World War I where she trained with nurse midwives, she went to Kentucky in 1925 and set to work.

Using her own inheritance she bought a small home in Hyden, and with additional fundraising launched the Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies. She brought in nurse midwives trained in Britain.

They traveled on horseback throughout the remote mountainous region to provide care. Breckinridge told them their first task was to build the trust of the community, to ask them what help they needed. Collaboration was the cornerstone of the organization. Soon they were welcomed.

"Our nurses go out on calls with any man, anywhere, at any hour of any night, if he comes for them," Breckinridge wrote in *Wide Neighborhoods: A Story of the Frontier Nursing Service*. "Our young couriers can ride alone over the most remote trails ... they have no fear of molestation."

"What is the use of taking care of a child in his early years ... if you let his father die," Breckinridge says in the documentary. Devastating consequences were borne by families if the father, the main breadwinner, was killed or maimed. Realizing that to really be effective nurses needed to treat the whole family, the name of the service was changed to reflect this. It became the Frontier Nursing Service.

Nurses worked to overcome prejudices of doctors, who thought nurse midwives couldn't provide adequate care. Using a journal developed by doctors, they taught themselves how to treat snakebites, broken legs, gunshot wounds, typhoid, diphtheria and more.

Families paid \$1 a year for the service, often by bartering goods and services. Almost all were small subsistence farmers. The only cash available came from infrequent part-time jobs on the railroad or felling timber. For a pregnancy, there was an additional \$5 fee. Nurse midwives provided prenatal care, stayed during the delivery and visited the mother and baby for the next 10 days.

National fundraising by Breckinridge allowed the FNS to buy materials and the local community supplied labor to build six rural health clinics between 1925 and 1931. In 1928 they built the first area hospital.



KET/PBS

Frontier Nursing Service brought medical care on horseback to Appalachia, treating whole families, reducing infant mortality, maternal deaths and improving health care for all.

In 1928 the Courier Service was organized, with volunteers helping deliver mail, medicine and other essentials. By 1937 nurse midwives had delivered 3,000 babies and only lost two mothers, far below the average for maternal deaths at the time.

When World War II started Breckinridge opened the Frontier Graduate School of Midwifery. It's still in operation today in Versailles, Kentucky. The Frontier Nursing Service has continued to evolve. District clinics still operate.

The documentary offers a small glimpse of what would be possible if health care was organized to provide treatment working people need, instead of making profits for hospital, pharmaceutical and insurance company owners. But that takes the kind of far-reaching change in social relations opened up when working people overturn capitalist rule and carry out a socialist revolution, as they did in Cuba.

"Angels on Horseback" is well worth watching.

## Special Metals steelworkers strike in West Virginia strong after 134 days

BY AMY HUSK

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. — "One hundred and thirty-four days! That's how long we've been at this," striker Jason Hogsett told this *Militant* worker-correspondent at the main gate picket in front of Special Metals Feb. 11. "There's no point in giving in now!" The 450 members of United Steelworkers Local 40 have been on strike since Oct. 1.

"The main issue is the attitude of management," the 16-year veteran in the plant said. "They don't care about the workers. It wouldn't be hard for them to give us a decent raise and keep the insurance payments the same. But this is about power and spite."

Special Metals management has refused to back off from demanding the

workers agree to pay substantially more for their insurance, and have offered no raises or insultingly small raises.

Special Metals is owned by billionaire Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway conglomerate, which also owns the BNSF Railway, Duracell, Fruit of the Loom, Geico, Helzberg Diamonds, Dairy Queen, Kraft Heinz and many more manufacturing, insurance and other companies.

At the union hall workers carried in donations of propane tanks and pizza dough. Many local workers and vendors have donated food and other necessities for the strikers and their families.

"Our negotiating committee rejected the company's 'last, best, and final offer' **Continued on page 5**

# THE MILITANT

**Fight Jew-hatred wherever it raises its head!**



SWP members join 25,000 in 2020 New York action to protest antisemitic attacks.

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Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Seth Galinsky, Emma Johnson, Martin Koppel, Roy Landersen, Jacob Perasso, Brian Williams.

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The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Telephone: (212) 244-4899

Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: [themilitant@mac.com](mailto:themilitant@mac.com)

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Submissions to the *Militant* may be published in the newspaper in print and digital format. By submitting, authors represent that their submissions are original and consent to publication in this manner.

Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant's* views. These are expressed in editorials.

# 'Militant' looks to Spring drive

**Continued from front page**

people who subscribed to the paper during the fall to renew. Many who did so said they were particularly interested in the *Militant's* coverage of union strikes and its broader explanation of U.S. and world politics from a working-class perspective.

"I like the *Militant* newspaper. I don't read all the articles, but some, and it's important, because I find out about a lot of things I don't know about. I've noticed the many strikes of workers in other places," Angelica Gutierrez, one of the 175 workers on strike against Rich's Jon Donaire Desserts bakery in Santa Fe Springs, California, told SWP member Fredy Huinil at a Feb. 12 strike support rally there.

Gutierrez is one of the members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union Local 37 who had subscribed, then renewed their subscriptions to the *Militant*.

"The *Militant* is a great tool," Mark Grieve, a truck driver and Teamsters union member, told Communist League members Steve Penner and Felix Vincent Ardea in Toronto Feb. 13 as he renewed his subscription. "I plan to use it to talk to my co-workers about what's happening in the world."

"Safety on the job is one of the most important issues facing truckers," he said. "We can't wait until someone is killed to start fighting for safe working conditions."

Grieve also bought the new Pathfinder title *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity* and *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* and donated \$20 to the *Militant*.

The new title says on its back cover, "Without understanding how human society, since our remotest ancestors, has been created through social labor, working people remain prisoners of the capitalist epoch in which we live." Then it

says, "Only the revolutionary conquest of state power by the working class, conscious of our class position and conditions of emancipation, can open the door to a future."

The drive for expanding the number of long-term readers of the *Militant* in Canada, Katy LeRougetel writes, "has helped us get back to regions to reconnect with subscribers who party members met during the fall drive, and has made this a more important part of our work." This has included walking picket lines with striking hotel workers in Vancouver, British Columbia; talking with working people impacted by the massive flooding in the area there last year; and meeting with truckers in the fight being waged in Canada against wage theft and for respect.

## Long-term readers behind bars

Among those who have responded in a big way are workers behind bars. During the course of this drive renewals from prisoners were more than 10% of the international goal.

There are now more than 170 prisoner *Militant* subscribers in 29 states, the most in over a decade. The paper circulates in 98 different federal, state and municipal prisons.

"I love reading the *Militant*," wrote one subscriber in a Florida prison when he renewed. "I share it with my friends and others." Prisoners often tell us about how each issue of the paper gets passed around to dozens of fellow inmates.

"If not for this newspaper, I would not be well informed about world struggles. Therefore, thank you," wrote a prisoner who renewed in Pennsylvania.

"I thoroughly appreciate what your organization is doing," wrote a prisoner from Texas.

Every month the *Militant* receives requests from prisoners who found out about the paper from fellow inmates. Others got interested after hearing about it in a prisoner resource guide or from relatives or friends. The Militant Prisoners' Fund makes subscriptions available at reduced rates or on a complimentary basis for those who cannot afford it.

Anxious that her subscription would not lapse, Sharon Burnett from Chicago called the *Militant's* office in New York to ask about continuing to get the paper. Members Leroy Watson and Dean Hazlewood of the SWP branch in Chicago promptly got in touch with her and signed her up.

This paper "touches me and other people that I know," she said. "I have been through this." Burnett, a retired health care worker and member of the Service Employees International Union,

## 'Militant' Renewal Drive Jan. 1 - Feb. 15, Final chart

Country	Quota	Sold
<b>UNITED STATES</b>		
Albany*	20	22
Atlanta	16	17
Chicago	25	31
Cincinnati	10	10
Dallas-Fort Worth*	15	19
Lincoln*	4	6
Los Angeles	17	19
Miami	7	8
Minneapolis	12	14
N. New Jersey	16	16
New York	25	27
Oakland	18	20
Philadelphia	10	10
Pittsburgh	12	14
Seattle	13	24
Washington, DC	11	13
Total U.S.	231	270
Prisoners*	20	32
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>		
London	10	17
Manchester	8	12
Total U.K.	18	29
Canada	30	34
New Zealand	5	9
Australia	10	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>385</b>
<b>SHOULD BE</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>300</b>
*Raised Goal		

## Socialist Workers Party 2022 candidates

### California

Eleanor García, US Senate  
Joel Britton, Governor

### Florida

Rachele Fruit, Governor

### Georgia

Lisa Potash, US Senate  
Sam Manuel, Governor

### Illinois

John Hawkins, US Senate  
Naomi Craine, Governor

## 'Trucking bosses treat you like they own you'



Militant/Terry Evans

RIDGEFIELD, N.J. — "Once you're carrying millions of dollars of their equipment, company owners treat you like they own you," oversize load trucker Michael Pitcher told Socialist Workers Party members at the Vincent Lombardi truck stop here Feb. 13. SWP members are meeting with truckers at truck stops across the country, discussing attacks by the bosses they face today and offering solidarity. "One of the biggest problems is a lack of rest areas. We need a union."

Pitcher got a copy of *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs to learn more about the strikes and organizing drives that made Minneapolis a union town in the 1930s.

Drivers SWP members spoke to were following government attacks on truckers protesting in Canada, and the venom spewed against them by officials and the liberal press. Truckers and others are demanding an end to government-imposed mandates, including those that bar unvaccinated drivers from getting work.

"I'm going to join a strike organized here March 1 to protest U.S. government mandates and to support the Canadian truckers," owner-operator Osiris Cabrera, left, told SWP member Nancy Boyasko, right.

"Truckers in the U.S. face similar conditions as truckers in Canada," Boyasko said. "The Socialist Workers Party supports their fights to defend themselves from attacks by the trucking bosses and the government. The SWP also opposes government/employer mandates. They set a precedent that will be used against the working class."

"The labor movement should lead in explaining why workers should get vaccinated," she said. "The government and press portray working people in Canada who are trying to defend themselves as reactionary 'deplorables.'"

"They're trying to make us the enemy," Cabrera said. He subscribed to the *Militant*.

"We get low rates from brokers for the work we do and have to pay more and more for diesel," said Jason Lopez, an owner-operator from New Jersey. The price of a gallon of diesel has gone from \$3.05 in January 2020 to \$3.72 this past January. "The only way to stop brokers from cutting rates is if all truckers stick together. When prices go up brokers should put up the rate we get for the job."

— TERRY EVANS

is recovering from an injury on the job. She also purchased *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity* and *Malcolm X Talks to Young People* and said she wants to be active in the SWP campaign of Naomi Craine for governor of Illinois and John Hawkins for U.S. Senate.

In Fort Worth, Texas, SWP members first met student Corey Picklesimer from Plano and Benjamin Koloski from Dallas at a women's rights demonstration in Dallas last fall. They both renewed their

subscriptions, purchased copies of the new book and are interested in participating in the upcoming April 24-May 8 international brigade to Cuba, reports Josefina Otero.

"I want to support the working-class struggles and support the SWP and become an active participant," Koloski, a software computer programmer, said. "I see in my life the harmful effects of capitalism and want to pitch in somehow to change it."

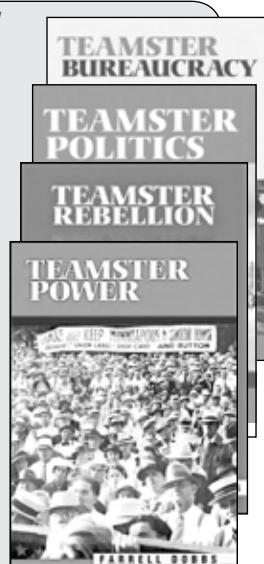
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by Farrell Dobbs

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# Join May Day Brigade! Learn about Cuba's socialist revolution

BY JANET POST

For anyone wanting to learn firsthand about the Cuban Revolution, an excellent opportunity is the 15th International May Day Voluntary Work Brigade to Cuba this spring, set for April 24 to May 8. The National Network on Cuba organizes the U.S. delegation.

The brigade is hosted by the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). A highlight will be joining this year's May Day mobilization in Havana's Plaza of the Revolution, where Cubans will mark the international workers' day in support of Cuba's living revolution. The next day brigadistas take part in an international conference to discuss advancing solidarity with Cuba.

The 1959 victory of Cuban workers and farmers — led by Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement — over-

threw the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship and brought a workers and farmers government to power, opening the door for the socialist revolution in the Americas.

The brigade provides a unique opportunity to meet and talk with Cuban workers, farmers and youth and to become better armed to return home and counter Washington's lies and attacks against the revolution. Over the terms of 13 consecutive presidents, Democrats and Republicans alike from Eisenhower to Biden, the U.S. capitalist rulers have waged a relentless economic and political war against the Cuban Revolution, seeking to punish the Cuban people.

Brigade participants meet and talk with representatives of the revolution's mass organizations, Union of Young Communists, trade unions, Federation of Cuban Women, and farm col-



Contramaestre News

May Day march in Contramaestre, Santiago de Cuba, May 1, 2019, celebrates Cuban Revolution. May Day Brigade members will join 2022 march in Havana, meet with mass organizations.

lectives. They visit cultural venues, health care and day care centers, factories, schools and museums, and meet with workers there. Brigadistas carry out voluntary agricultural work in the

fields alongside Cuban farmers.

The brigade is also a real opportunity for participants to describe to Cubans the reality of the working-class struggles in the U.S. and other countries they come from, as well as the political activities they have been part of. On the brigade in 2019 there were 320 people from 21 countries, including 65 from the U.S., the largest contingent.

For the last two years during the COVID-19 pandemic, Cuba has been unable to host the brigade, due to health considerations and Washington's travel restrictions. But today there is a resurgence of public activities on the island, such as the Jan. 27 "March of the Torches" that drew thousands into the streets commemorating the 169th birthday of José Martí, Cuba's national revolutionary hero. The central leader of Cuba's 19th century independence struggle against Spain, Martí was an intransigent opponent of the U.S. rulers' efforts to seize Cuba as their colony.

Members of the Chicago Cuba Coalition have produced a flyer to promote the brigade, and are planning to distribute it Feb. 27 at their next monthly protest against the U.S. embargo. Similar events will be organized worldwide on the last Sunday of the month.

For more information on the International May Day Voluntary Work Brigade to Cuba, contact the National Network on Cuba at [www.nnoc.org](http://www.nnoc.org), or Socialist Workers Party branches listed on page 8.

## Puerto Rican teachers protest over wages, pension cuts

BY SETH GALINSKY

Thousands of teachers, joined by contingents of firefighters, fellow unionists and others, marched to the governor's mansion in the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico Feb. 9 to demand higher wages and oppose cuts in pensions. Protesters also denounced a U.S.-imposed plan for the colonial regime to restart making payments on its debt to the island's wealthy bondholders. It was the second large protest by teachers in a week.

"Struggle yes, surrender no!" marchers chanted. The protests were initiated by a coalition of unions of teachers and school workers — Federation of Teachers of Puerto Rico, Únate and Educamos. Thousands of the island's 22,000 teachers called out sick for three days leading up to the Feb. 9 march.

Teachers, who make a base wage of \$1,750 a month, have not had a pay raise in 22 years. A \$470 a month increase had been set to take place on Jan. 1, 2023. Firefighters make even less.

The low wages combined with rising inflation has forced many teachers to take a second or third job to make ends meet, Eva Ayala Reyes, a retired teacher and former president of Educamos, told the *Militant* by phone Feb. 11.

After teacher Pablo Mass died in a car accident early in the morning Feb. 1 — likely falling asleep at the wheel after a shift on his third job, as a security guard — outrage increased. As a result, "we have been winning public opinion in favor of the teachers," Ayala said.

Puerto Rico's working people have been wracked by a deep economic and social crisis, a result of the deepening crisis of capitalism on a world scale accelerated by the island's colonial status. This increased as recession hit in 2006, and the colonial regime laid off more than 30,000 government workers, raised sales taxes and cut medical coverage.

Government negligence, corruption and disregard for the lives of working people made things even worse in the wake of Hurricane Maria in 2018. The population of Puerto Rico dropped 11.8% from 2010 to 2020, as young people left the island for the United States.

A U.S.-court-approved debt restructuring plan begins March 15, with a \$7 billion payout to bondholders — as soon as the Puerto Rican legislature releases

the funds. This is the first payment on the colonial regime's \$72 billion debt in five years, since being halted when the government said it was bankrupt.

The Barack Obama administration imposed the Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico in 2016. The junta, as Puerto Ricans call it, was given the power to make the decisions concerning the government's finances and to veto any of the government's financial and budgetary decisions it objected to.

### Pension cuts at center of debt 'plan'

At the heart of the new deal is generating funds by gutting future pensions for teachers and other public employees. It replaces defined-benefit plans that have guaranteed monthly payments with the equivalent of a 401(k), which makes pensions dependent on the success of "investments" in stocks, bonds and other financial paper. At the same time, the retirement age is being raised.

San Juan teacher Luis Colón Santos told the *Wall Street Journal* that he had planned on retiring when he reached 55 with a \$1,400 monthly pension. Under the new plan he can't retire until he is 63

and his pension will be less than \$600.

The junta and Puerto Rican government claim that the pensions of current retirees won't be touched. "But where is the money going to come from to pay their benefits?" retired teacher Ayala said, since the payments from working teachers will now go to a new pension fund and the government still owes \$50 billion to the old one. "This could produce a domino effect and eventually the whole pension system could collapse."

Pressured by the protests, Gov. Pedro Pierluisi met with teacher representatives. He promised to introduce a bill to increase teachers' wages by \$1,000 a month and firefighters' wages by \$500.

But there's a catch. The increase has to be approved by the junta.

"If there is money to pay the vultures \$7 billion, they can't say there is no money to pay the teachers or other workers their pensions," Mercedes Martínez, president of the Federation of Teachers, said at a press conference Feb. 13, demanding a halt to the debt payments. "We're not just defending for teachers but all of the people of Puerto Rico." She announced more protest actions across the island, including on Feb. 15.

## Greek meeting celebrates Cuba, books by Che Guevara

BY GEORGES MEHRABIAN

ATHENS, Greece — Publishing house Diethnes Vima organized a discussion on "Che Guevara's contributions to socialism in Cuba and proletarian internationalism worldwide" as a celebration of the anniversary of the Cuban Revolution here Jan. 22. Two books were presented — *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* and *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, which are coming out in new printings in Greek.

Addressing the anniversary and the books were Zelmys Maria Domínguez Cortina, Cuban ambassador to Greece; Nikos Karandreas, president of the Greek-Cuban Friendship Society; and Magdalini Lappa and Natasha Terlexi, both from Diethnes Vima. The José Martí Cultural Association gave greetings.

The meeting was marked by the participation of a number of workers, including from the airport, steel mills, and a biscuit factory, along with half a dozen

Pakistani immigrant workers, among the 45 participants.

"Fidel Castro explained that the writings of Che, his political and revolutionary thinking, will have a permanent value to the Cuban revolutionary process, as well as the Latin American one," Ambassador Domínguez Cortina said. "His work *Socialism and Man in Cuba* is very important, it summarizes his thinking, his theories."

"What comes across in these two books is that Che had confidence in the fact that solidarity would prevail. He had confidence in the capacities of ordinary working people to overcome these divisions and learn from collaboration through our work together," Lappa, a 25-year-old machine operator and member of the Diethnes Vima editorial board, said. "And that the people transformed through the action of solidarity would be the basis of the new socialist society."

"Che put the role of working people,

workers and farmers, front and center," said Terlexi, president of Diethnes Vima. "The Cuban leadership headed by Fidel Castro politically armed the masses to organize and fight for their rights."

"As the banks, large landholdings, and industry became the property of the Cuban people, Che was in the forefront of working out how it would be organized so that working people themselves set social priorities. He didn't approach the task as an administrator. He acted on the fact that this could only be accomplished as the toilers learned and acquired confidence in themselves and in each other by *doing*; as they took more and more responsibility for their work, their lives and their society."

"For him international solidarity was not only about aid to the struggles of other oppressed people around the world, it was about advancing together with toilers worldwide," she said. "More than that, it was about the very soul of the Cuban Revolution."

# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

## GM workers in Mexico vote for new independent union

Workers at the General Motors pickup-truck plant in Guanajuato, Mexico, voted overwhelmingly for a new independent union in early February, sending a message to the U.S. auto-giant bosses they will no longer accept low wages and abusive working conditions.

With 88% of the plant's 6,300 workers voting, the SINTTIA autoworkers union won 78% of the vote, soundly defeating the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM)-affiliated union, which had "represented" workers there since the plant opened 25 years ago. The CTM, the largest union federation in Mexico, has long been integrated into the capitalist government's bureaucracy, working with the bosses to keep labor peace.

Willy Gómez Zuppa, an advisor to the union and professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, spoke to the *Militant* by phone Feb. 7. He said the fight at GM began in 2019 after 18 workers were fired for demanding better work conditions, including the right to bathroom breaks.

As part of negotiations over the new U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade pact, the Mexican government modified its labor laws in 2019 to require that contracts be approved by workers in a secret ballot, a rarity in Mexico. Regardless of their opinion of the trade deal, the workers used the new law to press their demands.

In August 2021, 55% of the workers voted down the CTM contract. "Taking advantage of that victory," Gómez said, they rapidly signed up 30% of the workers to demand a new union election.

The organizing drive by SINTTIA was backed by independent unions at Volkswagen and Audi in Puebla and at Nissan in Morelos. It was supported by the United Auto Workers and AFL-CIO in the U.S., Unifor in Canada and other international union federations. U.S. union officials explain their interest in the fight by GM workers in Silao as an effort to help create a stronger union that would "level the playing field," to put greater obstacles in the way of U.S. auto companies shifting work to Mexico to boost profits on the superexploitation of Mexican workers.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

### THE MILITANT

March 3, 1997

The first American Airlines pilots' strike since 1959 lasted only four minutes before President William Clinton intervened to stop the strike under the Railway Labor Act. The 9,300 members of the Allied Pilots Association had struck February 15.

The administration invoked the Railway Labor Act by citing a threat to the nation's commerce, and grave inconvenience to travelers. The act was signed in 1926 by President Calvin Coolidge and amended to include workers in the airline industry in 1934. Its purpose is to string out negotiations, tie up workers with restrictive regulations, and to sap the strength of the workers' fight.

Many airline workers and others saw the political impact that the strike could have had as the main reason for the intervention. "We're behind the pilots 100 percent," said Cruz Lopez, a ramp worker at American.

While auto parts workers in the U.S. average \$12 an hour, and some at assembly plants make \$32 an hour, workers at the GM plant in Guanajuato average around \$25 a day for a 12-hour workday.

During the lead-up to the election, SINTTIA Secretary General Maria Alejandra Morales, who works in the paint department, explained that the union would fight for higher wages, bathroom breaks as needed, the right to decide when to take vacation time, and better work schedules.

Now comes the hard part, Gómez said, forcing GM to sit down and to win a better contract. "The workers are learning to have confidence in their own efforts," he said.

—Seth Galinsky

## Minnesota teachers, staff rally for smaller classes, higher wages

MINNEAPOLIS — Over 1,000 teachers and supporters marched and rallied here Feb. 12 in subzero temperatures. The action took place leading up to a strike vote by teachers and support staff in both Minneapolis and St. Paul.

The unions in both cities have been negotiating for months over similar demands — smaller class sizes; hiring more support staff, including mental health support; and wage increases. Minneapolis Federation of Teachers Local 59 and St. Paul Federation of Educators Local 28 are asking for a pay increase to make up for over 20 years of no or low increases. Minneapolis educational support staff are asking for a starting wage of \$35,000, up from their current annual wage of \$24,000. They are also fighting against moves by district officials to end all limits on class size.

St. Paul School District officials say they don't have enough money to increase staff or wages, even though they received \$206.9 million in federal COVID-19 relief funds.

At the beginning of the march, Teamsters Local 120 members served hot beverages and food to the teachers from their truck. That local represents Marathon Petroleum refinery workers, who were locked out in a bitter fight last year.

"People may not want to vote for a strike because it will be a hardship for



Leaders of SINTTIA independent autoworkers union at GM plant in Guanajuato, Mexico, Feb. 3, after winning union election. At center is union Secretary General Maria Alejandra Morales.

them, but we have to fight this fight for our kids," St. Paul teacher Leah Stern told the *Militant*. "We need to make a living wage."

Students today are dealing with isolation at home from school closings ordered because of COVID, online classes and a recent spike in violence. Deshaun Hill Jr., North High School's quarterback, was shot and killed while walking home from school. Hours later, a school bus driver was hit in the face by a bullet while driving three young children.

"We're constantly asked to do more for less. There's not enough support staff, and many of our staff are working other jobs. There are three social workers in a school of 900 students," Brian Dean, a teacher in the North Minneapolis school district, told the *Militant*. "Mental health for our students is crucial. These kids are dealing with real trauma and violence"

Both Minneapolis and St. Paul teachers' strike votes are set to end Feb. 17.

—Gabrielle Prosser

## Special Metals strike stands strong

Continued from page 2

Feb. 3," said Greg Elkins, one of the organizers at the union hall. "There have been no talks since then. There's been no money coming in to strikers for four months now. There's a strike fund where workers can bring their bills to be paid, but no income. Many people have gotten part-time jobs."

At the main gate I also met Keith Wallace, who works at Walmart while the strike is on. He was picketing with Hogsett. Wallace was trying to hold down a tent when a gust almost took it away. Hogsett said there used to be a wooden shed at the gate but the company made the strikers take it down. The tent up in its place is now tattered and torn.

In January the bosses sent permanent layoff notices to 70 workers. Hogsett said this was a tactic to try to divide and demoralize strikers. After negotiations began again, those workers all got calls saying the layoffs were canceled.

"This is another example of how they don't care about what happens to people," said Hogsett. "This tactic was devastating for the workers who got the notices. Being out on strike this long is hard on us, lots of guys are having problems and suffering from depression. Imagine getting a letter saying you're laid off in the middle of that!"

At the Elm Street gate I met Kevin Owens, a 27-year veteran in the plant and son of a coal miner who worked for Pittston. "We've stuck together," he said. "Not a single member of Local 40 has crossed. At the beginning of the strike the company sent out letters to everyone that said they could continue to report to work and would no longer be affiliated with Local 40. Everyone threw away those letters.

"They are trying to break Local 40. We'll bend but we won't break," he said. "We'll stay out one day longer."

Local 40 needs solidarity and donations! Striker Derek Jones, who I met at the union hall, said his wife, Michelle Leadmon Jones, has set up a public Facebook page that lists what donations are needed and where to send them. The link is: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/433030618531888/>

"We have a lot of new followers. This page was set up to help the 450 union members out on strike from Special Metals!" Leadmon Jones posted Feb. 6. "We have an Amazon wish list setup, a fundraiser for cash donations setup and you can also drop items off at the union hall 24/7. The union hall address is 712 Buffington St. in Huntington, or at my house in Proctorville! If you scroll on this page you'll see our wish list and fundraiser! Thank you to everyone who has supported Local 40!"

### THE MILITANT

Official Weekly Organ of the Socialist Workers Party

March 1, 1947

LONDON — Great Britain received a rude awakening when a fuel shortage led to a factory shutdown affecting millions of workers on Feb. 10. All over the country "vigilance committees" are being set up to organize the fight against the employers during the emergency.

The shop stewards committee of the Standard Telephones and Cables factory calls for creation of area committees composed of representatives from trade unions, shop steward committees, trades councils and local Labor Parties, which would in cooperation with the Regional Fuel Boards, "direct the allocation, distribution and conservation of fuel."

It urges also that "should full employment in a particular industry or section of industry be impossible, a sliding scale of hours be devised by the Workers' Committee concerned to meet the particular situation" in dividing the work.

# Moscow hands off Ukraine!

Continued from front page

had won the Cold War after the Soviet Union came apart in 1991, and could act as it liked to assert its imperialist domination worldwide, was an illusion.

Attempting to defend its interests in the region, U.S. forces will now train alongside Danish troops after Copenhagen ended its decadeslong policy, adopted under pressure from Moscow, of not allowing foreign troops on its soil. The rulers of Norway and the Baltic countries are also asking for U.S. troops.

Thirty thousand Russian troops began a 10-day military exercise alongside Belarusian forces near the Ukrainian border Feb. 10. Russian naval maneuvers are being held in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov around the Crimean Peninsula. With the arrival of more forces and armaments elsewhere, Moscow has up to 140,000 troops encircling Ukraine, and 40 combat ships in the Black Sea.

Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, proposed more talks with Washington Feb. 14. The next day Moscow said it would withdraw an unspecified number of units from the Ukrainian border.

Moscow seized Crimea and armed and backed a proxy war in eastern Ukraine in 2014, after the hated President Viktor Yanukovych was overthrown by popular working-class mobilizations in Kyiv's Maidan square and across Ukraine.

Speaking beside German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Putin told a Feb. 15 press conference that his demand for a halt to NATO's eastward expansion is "unconditional." Moscow insists Ukraine, the largest country in Europe after Russia, be permanently excluded from the U.S.-dominated military alliance.

Russia's capitalist rulers see weakness among Washington's Western European imperialist allies. The German rulers, most of all, are increasingly dependent on piped Russian natural gas.

"Lasting security cannot be achieved against Russia but only with Russia," Scholz said at the press conference. He urged "all protagonists," including Washington, to agree Ukraine will not become a NATO member.

The German rulers have long run down their armed forces. They are convinced that Germany can compete as an imperialist power by balancing between Washington and Moscow, and by getting rich off their subjugation.

Maria Izquierdo, 55, works in



Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Moscow, Feb. 15. Russian rulers have hold over German rulers who increasingly rely on Moscow for natural gas.

out of Eastern Europe.

"Ukrainian workers and farmers showed their power in the mass 2014 Maidan actions," she said. "With a revolutionary leadership, they can advance their class interests, defend their national sovereignty and win widespread support across Russia and beyond."

Several thousand people marched in Kyiv Feb. 12 with banners like "Ukrainians will resist!" and "Say no to Putin!" Nazar Novoselsky, a protester, told the press, "We are here to show that we are not afraid." Tens of thousands of civilians are joining the defense reserves.

Russia's parliament urged Putin Feb. 14 to recognize the separatist-controlled Donetsk and Luhansk "People's Republics" as independent states. This would give Moscow further pretexts to attack Ukrainian sovereignty. At his press conference with Scholz, Putin claimed the Ukrainian government was carrying out "genocide" in the Donbas region.

Nearly 2 million people have been displaced by the fighting in eastern Ukraine and 14,000 killed. Hundreds of thousands found their way to Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city. Some still live in cramped temporary accommodations there more than seven years later.

Kharkiv "has become more pro-Ukrainian since the war started, like every city," Boris Redin, who has kept up a pro-Ukrainian protest tent, told the BBC Feb. 13.

In Chicago, some 50 people rallied, including factory workers, app-based drivers and fast food workers. Many took turns speaking at an open mic.

"I'm fighting for those with no papers to be able to get out of the shadows," said Juan Alvarez, an Uber driver who came with a delegation from the Independent Drivers Guild. Members of the group in Chicago, like those in New York and other cities, have been organizing for better wages and conditions and the right to form a union.

The largest action was in Washington, D.C., with nearly 1,000 people, including buses from New Jersey and participants who came from Connecticut and other parts of the Northeast. There were actions in Brewster, New York; Miami; Houston; Dallas; Philadelphia; three cities in Iowa; and several in California, among others.

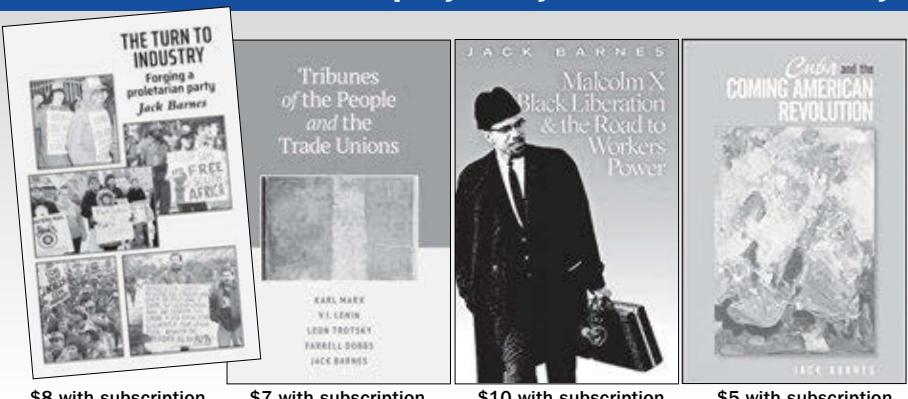
Immigrant labor is a key source of superprofits for U.S. bosses, who take advantage of those without legal documents to drive down their wages, then use that as a wedge to lower the wages of all workers. The bosses try to weaken the unions by pitting immigrant- and native-born workers against each other.

"The whole working class faces deeper attacks from the bosses," said Naomi Craine, a rail worker and Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of Illinois, at the Chicago rally. "The labor movement needs to fight for amnesty for all immigrants to put us in a stronger position to unite and organize all workers."

Many capitalists — seeking to defend their profits while avoiding price rises that erode sales — have resorted to alternative maneuvers. They're shrinking their products, adding hidden "processing" or other fees, or requiring custom-

Dan Fein contributed to this article.

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# Bernard Bates, Black farmers leader and fighter to the end

BY ELEANOR GARCIA

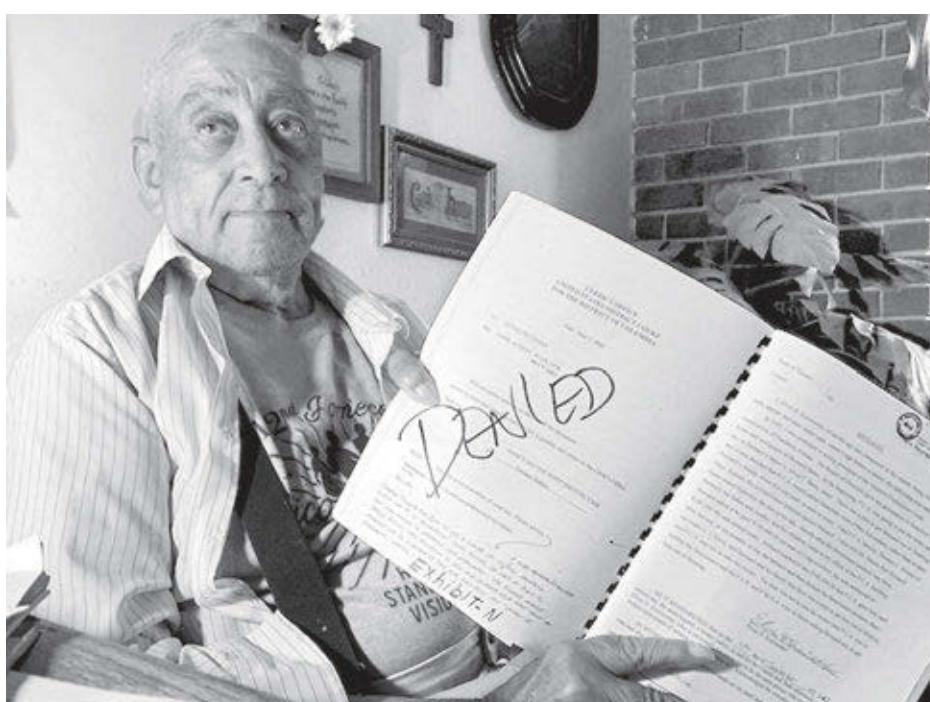
Bernard Bates, a longtime leader in the fight of Black farmers to keep their land, died Jan. 18 in Hays, Kansas. He was 85. He and his wife Ava farmed in Nicodemus, one of a dozen Black farming communities in Northwest Kansas settled by African Americans in the late 1800s after the Civil War and their emancipation. I had the great fortune to join with them in some of their struggles.

Bernard's great-great-grandparents had been slaves who were moved from Kentucky to Missouri in 1850. At the end of the Civil War the Bates family, along with other emancipated families, settled in Leavenworth, Kansas. Bernard's great-grandfather Perry, who fought as a volunteer with the U.S. colored infantry, bought land in Nicodemus toward the end of the 1800s. More than 40,000 African Americans made the journey to Kansas 1879-80, after the overthrow of Radical Reconstruction.

## A workers and farmers alliance

In October 1983, Bernard and Ava Bates and their family — they raised five children — were joined by 300 farmers, trade unionists and members of the Black community in a march to Graham County Courthouse in Hill City, Kansas, to protest the government foreclosure sale on 240 acres of their 950-acre farm. Caucasian farmers from Central and Midwest states and trade unionists from throughout the area came in solidarity.

Graham County Sheriff Don Scott pushed the sale through, backed by state police deployed along the three sides of the U-shaped building and on the rooftops. With fire hoses in the rear, they closed off the entrance. This experience impacted many at the protest — myself included — both on the forces of the state marshaled against



Kansas News Service/David Condos  
Bernard Bates, leader of fight by Black farmers to keep their land, shows documents from his legal battles. His dignity, courage and fighting spirit were inspiring to all who knew him.

were out of work due to long-term shutdowns by the steel bosses.

Workers and farmers discussed the need to support each other's struggles, that this was the only way to make progress. The Bates continued to participate in struggles, discussions and debates on how best to fight.

In 1988 the Bates' remaining farmland, farm equipment, and even their harvested wheat crop were foreclosed on, as happened to tens of thousands of Black and Caucasian farmers over the last few decades.

These events grew out of a call for nationwide protests against the capitalist economic crisis driving family farmers off the land. Farmers from Minnesota and Wisconsin donated hundreds of pounds of food for the event and for workers on the Iron Range, where 12,000 miners, members of the United Steelworkers union,

nard out of farming." He said they had decided that they would "rather foreclose, even if they lost money, rather than to take Bernard's money."

Like many farmers, Bernard Bates worked in factories at times to try to make ends meet. He worked as a forklift operator in a roofing materials factory until he was injured on the job, but he never stopped fighting to get his land back or to get paid reparations. Because of his reputation as a fighter and leader, other Black farmers and others in the Nicodemus community would come to him for help and he was able to get them their money.

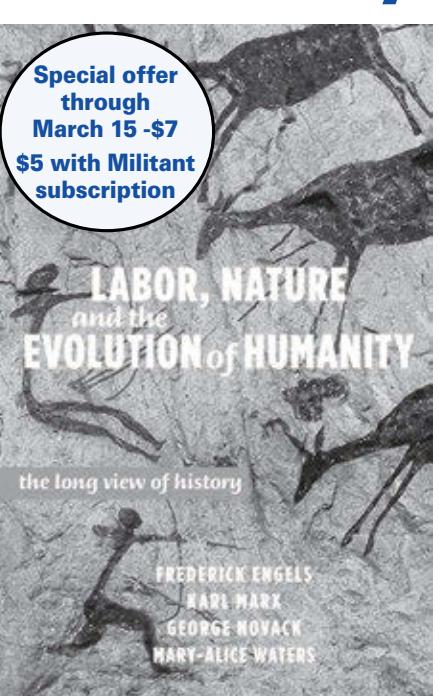
Bernard Bates was one of the original plaintiffs in Pigford v. Glickman, a discrimination case whose settlement in 1999 was supposed to send more than \$1 billion to Black farmers who had been victims of discrimination by the USDA. Despite the victory, he never received a penny.

Small farmers and workers today face a devastating crisis wrought by the deepening political crisis of the capitalist ruling class. Stagnation and inflation are worsening at the same time. The worker-farmer alliance that Bernard and Ava Bates were part of building in the 1980s is an example we can build on as inevitable new struggles unfold.

In a phone call I had with Ava and Bernard in December, almost 40 years later, occasioned by an article in the *Nation* about their continuing activity in the farm struggle, we talked about the 1980s protests, the tour, and the farmers and trade unionists who came together, and their relevance to what is unfolding in politics today.

Bernard Bates' dignity, courage and drive to keep fighting to hold onto his land remains an inspiration to farmers, workers and others who knew him. It will continue to inspire others to take up the fight. This is the best legacy anyone can leave.

New! A must read for today



Where did humanity come from? How did we arrive where we are today? Why is that even important?

Because without understanding how human society, since our remotest ancestors, has been created through social labor, working people remain prisoners of the capitalist epoch in which we live.

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# 'If the US attacks Cuba, they will face a war of the entire people'

The Spanish edition of *Making History: Interviews With Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces* by José Ramón Fernández, Enrique Carreras, Harry Villegas and Néstor López Cuba is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for February. Division Gen. Carreras was an air force officer who had trained in the U.S. during the Second World War. He opposed the U.S.-backed coup by Fulgencio Batista in 1952 and joined the revolutionary movement led by Fidel Castro. During the April 1961 Bay of Pigs mercenary attack against the socialist revolution in Cuba, Carreras led the revolution's fledgling air force, which played a decisive role in defeating the U.S.-backed invaders. The excerpt is from the interview with him, "War of the Entire People Is the Foundation of Our Defense." Copyright ©1999 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Courtesy Enrique Carreras

Enrique Carreras, second from left, went to North Vietnam in 1969 to learn how their air force organized to defend against U.S. imperialist assault. His goal was to offer solidarity and strengthen Cuba's ability to defend its revolution against Washington's attacks.

learned how they were often able to use the radar guidance system on incoming enemy planes to determine targets in advance and minimize the effectiveness of U.S. air strikes.

We traveled from Hanoi down close to the border with South Vietnam. The Vietnamese didn't let us go further, since several other members of our commission had already been killed as a result of taking big risks. These compañeros, who had arrived in Vietnam earlier than I did, found themselves in the middle of an antiaircraft battery under attack. A U.S. Navy plane had launched a missile against a radar installation, I believe, and the Cubans tried to take cover and watch what was happening at the same time. The missiles hit and exploded, killing them.

The Vietnamese didn't want the same thing to happen to us. They never wanted anybody to fight alongside them. They did want cooperation and aid. And they shared their experiences with us, since sooner or later we too were likely to be subjected to the same kind of aggression. We relayed these experiences back here to Cuba. It was extremely useful in training our pilots and preparing our antiaircraft defenses, so that air strikes against us would be less effective.

We saw firsthand the criminal character of the U.S. bombings. The U.S. warplanes destroyed all the bridges. They attacked cities using fragmentation bombs. Women and children would go

into their homemade shelters — lengths of pipeline buried underground. Sometimes, however, they couldn't shelter themselves adequately, and children were killed when cluster bombs hit the ground and fragmented. We saw these things happen. It was a criminal war against the Vietnamese people.

We learned from these experiences and changed our own defensive tactics. The truth is that the enemy compelled us to keep making these changes — and continues to do so now that we are alone, now that we no longer get the aid we used to before the socialist camp, in Fidel's words, fell like a me- ringue. It just disintegrated.

The war of the entire people — that is the foundation of our tactics and strategy. We are ready to confront whatever attack the enemy might carry out against us. You've been here. You've learned something about our ground troops.

And we're preparing as best we can to make sure that the air force is never destroyed. The majority of our aircraft are in underground shelters; others are above ground but in reinforced shelters. Even so, of course, we all know that U.S. weapons are very sophisticated and dangerous, and that no matter what measures we take the air force is going to suffer greatly. That's why our strategy has always been based on making clear that any country that invades this island will pay a very high price.

Invading Cuba would be a very big

risk for them. Cuba and the United States are very nearby, so it would be a lot harder for them to hide the consequences of the war. It would be a lot easier for people in the United States to see things close-up in Cuba than they were able to do in Vietnam — and, despite that, your antiwar movement won out. The closer to home events are, the faster your movement can win.

Let's hope they never get so crazy over there as to come here to attack us. We don't want deaths. All we want is to be able to work. All we want is to be able to help humanity, especially in Latin America, which is going through very painful times right now. There is a lot of hunger, a lot of poverty. And only revolution, only social change can salvage the situation....

The Special Period [of wartime-like economic shortages after the fall of the Soviet Union] has had a big impact, definitely....

[W]e have virtually no oil deposits in Cuba, and the little we do have is not very good quality. It has high sulfur content. This fuel shortage keeps us from maintaining our armed forces in optimal condition.

Prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Soviet government sold us large quantities of oil, and we paid very low prices. The end of these shipments was very abrupt. We had no time to make adjustments. Suddenly no one could find even a liter of oil. But we had maintained a strategic reserve, and that saved the day. Fidel and Raúl [Castro] had always insisted on that for defense purposes. We ended up having to utilize part of the strategic reserve so the lights could stay on, so refrigerators could function, so hospitals had electricity.

As the economic situation worsened, we kept on learning. The party leadership guided this effort. We have been learning the appropriate measures to tackle the difficulties we face. We've had to change our defensive strategy, for example. We've had to cut back the armed forces and relocate many cadres to agriculture, to tourism, to study other fields....

Who has made it possible for us to make these adjustments without affecting our defense preparedness? The people. The people are organized in the Territorial Troop Militia and in the reserves, as well as in the standing army.

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## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

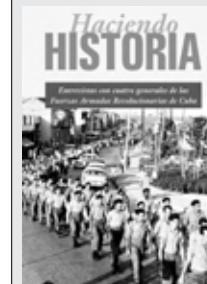
BY ENRIQUE CARRERAS

I was in Vietnam, although not as a combatant. I was there for several months as part of a commission to learn from the experiences of North Vietnam's antiaircraft defenses against the U.S. bombing. The commission included radar specialists, communications experts, and so on. We saw how the tiny Vietnamese air force was organized, and

### February BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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## EDITORIAL

# Join in expanding reach of the 'Militant'!

The *Militant*'s successful subscription renewal campaign expanded the paper's long-term readership and drew a new levy of readers to join in common work with members of the Socialist Workers Party.

Next up is a spring circulation drive in coming weeks to win hundreds of new readers, expand the circulation of books by revolutionary leaders, and raise well over \$100,000 to finance the work of the paper.

Getting the *Militant* out in cities, towns and rural areas is an integral part of the mass work carried out by members of the SWP as they join together with fellow workers to strengthen our class. It goes hand in hand with standing up to boss attacks on wages and working conditions, joining strike picket lines and building solidarity, as well as advancing protests in the interests of working people worldwide, such as actions demanding "Moscow hands off Ukraine!"

The paper spreads the word about oil workers fighting for a new contract at Marathon and is remembered by some for its coverage of their 2015 strike.

It's a tribune of all the exploited and oppressed, speaking out against Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's use of the Emergencies Act to try to crush protests by truckers and others. And against his vicious condemnation of working people who stand up to the dictates of the capitalist rulers.

It features articles that unravel the history of previous revolutionary struggles, to draw the lessons

from them for today's challenges.

The *Militant* reports the reality of the class struggle in a country and world divided between the capitalist exploiters and billions of workers, farmers and others oppressed by them. It seeks to raise workers' class consciousness and our confidence in relying on our own forces, and to expand our internationalism.

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## Demand end to Ottawa's attack on protests, rights

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bec, fighting the theft of their land.

The Emergencies Act also gives increased powers to the police and the courts, including to impose fines of up to \$5,000 and prison sentences of up to six years, and to seize vehicles used in the protests.

The protests in Ottawa, Canada's capital, were initiated by truckers, who face restrictions on their right to work. These actions have continued for over three weeks and include many others who focus on ending government vaccine mandates.

The Canadian Armed Forces is investigating at least six soldiers who they say have publicly showed support for the protests against vaccine mandates and other COVID-19 measures. Canadian authorities claim their military forces are not allowed to make public comments counter to the government's political line.

A six-day blockade of the Ambassador Bridge between Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit — the route for 25% of the trade between Canada and the U.S. — was ended by police Feb. 13 after the Ontario provincial government got a court order. "We're going to throw every tool we've got at you," said Doug Ford, Ontario's Progressive Conservative premier.

The Canadian government and the liberal press — both here, in the U.S. and beyond — have tried to smear the protesters as reactionary, violent, boorish fools. In his Feb. 14 opinion piece, Al Jazeera columnist Andrew Mitrovica called the protesters "smug, mostly white, surplus-store-camouflage-gear-wearing louts." Liberals like him are simply expressing their fear and hatred of the working class.

The fact is the protests, marked by Canadian flags, anti-vaccination slogans and calls for "freedom," have been overwhelmingly peaceful.

"Ottawa is using the fact that many workers as well as others disagree with aspects of the 'Freedom Convoy' to give the federal government, its political police, the RCMP, and other police forces, sweeping powers to limit our right to protest and to speak out against government abuse," Tessier said.

Large numbers of workers do sympathize with the need to dial down government restrictions after over two years of shutdowns and travel bans.

### 1970 War Measures Act

The last time Ottawa did something similar was in 1970, when the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau, father of the current prime minister, imposed the War Measures Act and sent 8,000 Canadian troops to Quebec. Some 500 people were arrested without warrants, including prominent trade union leaders, fighters for

Quebec independence, socialists, leaders of what is now the Communist League, artists and others.

Ottawa's sweeping attack on democratic rights then was to crush the mass movement against the national oppression of the Quebecois and the interconnected rise of workers' struggles in Quebec and elsewhere. The Emergencies Act replaced the War Measures Act in 1988 and is being invoked for the first time.

Tessier, a rail train conductor and member of the Teamsters union, called on unions and all supporters of democratic rights to speak out against the imposition of the Emergencies Act and to protest against it.

"Ottawa has been looking for a pretext to increase its powers and those of the cops to limit the democratic and political rights of working people and our allies," the Communist League candidate said. "As the economic, social and political crisis of the capitalist system deepens they will need to step up their attacks against working people and our organizations."

"What if tomorrow some trade union wants to organize a protest?" Arshdeep Singh Kang, a long-haul trucker based in Brampton, Ontario, asked in an interview with the *Militant*. "The government could attack them. This is not right. We should oppose this."

Last April 30 the Trudeau government declared a strike by over 1,100 longshore workers at the Port of Montreal to be illegal. It claimed the strike was harming the economy, one of the main pretexts they're using to attack today's protests. The port workers were fighting unsafe and intolerable work schedules. In June 2011, the Conservative government of Stephen Harper did exactly the same thing, declaring a strike by postal workers against concession demands illegal.

Kang, one of the leaders of a fight by truckers against bosses' wage theft, said, "I am not a supporter of the Freedom Convoy and I don't agree with many of the things they do. But I am not in favor of the government crushing their right to protest." This law is "a serious violation of our fundamental right of expression."

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association issued a statement condemning the government action. Mark Grieve, a Toronto ready-mix trucker and a member of the Teamsters union, said the imposition of the Emergencies Act is "grotesque."

"The government has done nothing to support working people in more than two years of the pandemic and now say they need to do this, partly because of the pandemic," he told the *Militant*. "They also claim the Ottawa protests are violent. But that's not true."

"The unions should oppose this law," he said. "We need to defend the right to protest and oppose giving the police more powers."

## Refinery workers rally

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what paper you're with! You guys rode with us to our picket lines back in 2015."

Some 5,200 refinery workers went out on strike that year over safety issues, including the bosses' push for 12-hour shifts, which would make working conditions more dangerous.

Martin explained Marathon hasn't addressed any of the proposals the union has brought to the table, including on wages, benefits and safety concerns. Another important issue concerns projected carbon-capture projects, where companies plan to use new technology to capture carbon emissions from their refineries and turn them into a new source of energy.

"The companies don't seem to care if workers weigh in, but of course it'll be us doing the work," he said.

Samir Hazboun, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate in Ohio, who had come to join the protest and offer the SWP's solidarity, agreed. "We know the working class has to be the real steward of both labor and nature. The bosses don't care what happens along the way in their relentless drive for profit."

"Right," Martin said, "To the companies it's always safety third and profit first."

Cindy Bogart Barnhill, an operator in a chemical plant in Lima and member of Steelworkers Local 1-00626, explained how the bosses cut corners on safety. "Much of training now is on the computer. The company calls it 'Virtual Training Assistant.' Once you answer correctly a few questions, you're now 'safety qualified,' they say," Barnhill said. "Then if you get hurt, they point out you passed the course. They say it's your fault. And that place is dangerous!"

"I live two blocks from the plant," she said. "Thankfully, the spills and fires so far have only required 'shelter in place' warnings, not evacuations."

### Overtime, onerous schedules

The workers also face abusive and dangerous schedules. Martin reported that in the two months leading up to Thanksgiving he had only three days off. Most refinery workers are working six to seven days a week. With industry turnaround coming up, a time when the refineries shut down to retool and then reopen, workers know their schedules will get worse.

Workers are expecting an expanded turnaround this year, as a substantial amount of planned work at the refineries was delayed during the pandemic. "How much overtime are you guys working? 50, 60, 70, 80 hours?" Eric Schultz, president of Steelworkers Local 7-1 at BP in Whiting, Indiana, asked the crowd. "The answer is too damn much!" The workers answered back with a chant of "Stand up, fight back!"

Byron Cavera, who's worked at the plant for five years, said this was the first union action he'd attended. "I love the way we've all come together from different refineries around the country in solidarity," he said.

"Greed is at the heart of the issue here. The company always claims that safety is its number one priority, but then we're out in the field, the bosses' only concern is the production numbers," he said. "And then you're regarded as the bad guy for simply trying to follow the company's own policies on safety!"

"We have Steelworkers from Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Indiana, Texas, Washington and Ohio here with us today," Mike Smith, chair of the union's National Oil Bargaining Committee, told the rally. "This fight isn't just about wages! The industry has changed quite a bit and we need a lot of security and safety nets for our members. We've been coming to work every day for the past two years. We can't do our jobs from home like management, and now this company can't address our concerns? They've made record profits."

Steelworkers held solidarity actions elsewhere. More than 100 members of USW Local 7-1 rallied outside the BP refinery in Whiting. Their rally ended on a spirited note, with unionists promising they'd be back as many times as it takes to force Marathon to take their demands seriously.

*Naomi Craine contributed to this article.*

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